

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6781

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSMACHTHAT

S E C R E T BANGKOK 12815

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RP, CH, TS

SUBJECT: THAI/ROC RELATIONS

SUMMARY. ADMIRAL MA CHI-CHUANG, THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (ROC) AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, DEPARTED BANGKOK JUNE 28. THE RTG HAS GIVEN THE REMAINDER OF THE ROC EMBASSY OFFICIALS 30 DAYS IN WHICH TO WIND UP EMBASSY AFFAIRS BEFORE FOLLOWING MA TO TAIPEI. THE KING HAS EXPRESSED HIS SYMPATHY AND REGRET THAT THE DEPARTURE IS OF NECESSITY IN SUCH HASTE. HE HAS REQUESTED THAT THE ROC CONTINUE ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE THAI HILL TRIBES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, BUT THE ROC INTENDS TO TERMINATE WHATEVER OTHER MODEST AID PROGRAMS IT MAY HAVE. ROC DIPLOMATS EXPECT THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO MAINTAIN

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A TRADE AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS OFFICE IN BANGKOK IN

UNOFFICIAL GUISE. WYRLE THE ROC DEPARTURE HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY SIGNS OF REGRET AND SADNESS, THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN BANGKOK HAS REACTED WITH LESS THAN EXPECTED EMOTION. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE EXPLOSIVE ISSUE OF IBMND FORCES HAS BEEN RESOLVED. END SUMMARY.

1. ROC AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND ADMIRAL MA CHI-CHUANG DEPARTED THAILAND FROM DON MUANG AIRPORT JUNE 28 AMIDST HUNDREDS OF WELL WISHERS AND POLITICAL MOURNERS. AT THE AIRPORT THERE WERE SIGNS OF SADNESS AND REGRET, BUT THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THOSE WHOSE SEGMENTS ARE STRONGLY AND VOCALLY PRO-TAIWAN, WAS ONE OF FATALISTIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE INEVITABLE. DURING THE LAST FEW DDYS OF HIS RESIDENCE IN BANGKOK, THE KING RECEIVED MA, AND REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED HIS REGRET THAT THE ROC WAS FORCED TO WIND UP ITS AFFAIRS IN SUCH HASTE. THE REMAINDER OF THE ROC DIPLOMATS IN THAILAND HAVE 30 DAYS IN WHICH TO COMPLETE THE WORK OF CLOSING DOWN THE EMBASSY, AND LEAVE THE COUNTRY. THE KING ASKED THAT THE ROC PROGRAM OF TECHNICAL AND AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE TO THE THAI HILL TRIBES CONTINUE, BUT THE ROC APPARENTLY INTENDS TO TERMINATE WHATEVER OTHER MODEST ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IT MAINTAINS.

2. MINISTER OF EMBASSY LING CHU-HSUN TOLD THE DCM JUNE 28 THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT THE PRC AND THE RTG TO HAVE FORMAL RELATIONS (MEANING AN EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS) FOR SEVERAL MONTHS YET, AND HE EXPRESSED THE VAGUE HOPE THAT THE THAI MILITARY WILL INTERVENE TO DELAY INDEFINITELY THE OPENING OF A PRC EMBASSY. HE DOES NOT, HOWEVER, EXPECT THE THAI MILITARY OR ANYONE ELSE TO RECOGNIZE THE ROC AGAIN. LING ALSO SAID THAT THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOLDS TITLE TO THE ROC CHANCERY REAL ESTATE; HIS GUESS IS THAT THE CHAMBER WILL OFFER THE PROPERTY TO THE PRC, BUT THAT THE OFFER WILL BE DECLINED (AND RENAMED "THE ISLAND OF TEN THOUSAND INVISIBLE BROADCASTING STATIONS"). THERE HAVE BEEN PERSISTENT RUMORS WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY HERE

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FOR SEVERAL MONTHS THAT THE ROC, IF FINALLY FACED WITH THE TERMINATION OF ITS RELATIONS WITH THAILAND, WOULD SPONSOR OR ASSIST A MILITARY COUP CENTERED ON SUPPORTERS OF DEPARTED FIELD MARSHAL PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIAN AND COLONEL NARONG KITTIKHACHON. WE REGARD SUCH A POSSIBILITY AS FAR-FETCHED.

3. ONE OF THE KING'S CLOSE ADVISORS TOLD THE

POLITICAL COUNSELOR JUNE 30 THAT HE RESENTED WHAT HE TERMED AMBASSADOR MA'S EFFORTS TO USE THE KING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS OF RAPPROCHEMENT WITH CHINA AT THE LAST MINUTE. THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS OTHER RUMORS CIRCULATING ABOUT POSSIBLE DISRUPTIONS IN THAI SOCIETY WHICH MIGHT RESULT FROM THE ROC DEPARTURE, BUT THE GENERAL AMBIENCE WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IS ONE OF RESIGNED AND SLIGHTLY DESPAIRING ACCEPTANCE OF THE INEVITABLE. FOR THE MAJORITY, THE ROC DEPARTURE WILL MEAN LITTLE OR NO CHANGE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES. FOR THE MINORITY WHO HAVE BENEFITTED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE ROC-THAI RELATIONSHIP, THE LONG APPROACH TO THE FINAL MOMENTS PERHAPS SOFTENED THE BLOW. THERE IS NO PUBLIC DISSENSION OR OUTCRY OVER MA'S JOURNEY HOME.

4. THE THAI HAVE HIGH, IF SOMEWHAT NAIVE, HOPES OF HAVING THEIR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO WITH RESPECT TO TRADE WITH TAIWAN. THE BALANCE OF THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WAS OVER US\$100 MILLION IN THAILAND'S FAVOR LAST YEAR. ACCORDING TO ONE ROC EMBASSY ECONOMIC OFFICER, HOWEVER, THE ROC HAS ALREADY BEGUN DIVERTING A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF ITS MAIZE PURCHASES TO THE U.S. THIS SAME OFFICIAL REMARKED THAT THE TRADE WITH THAILAND NO LONGER MEANT ANYTHING TO TAIWAN, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE EFFORT TO MAINTAIN IT. THE PALACE OFFICIAL OPTIMISTICALLY NOTED THAT MALAYSIAN AIRLINES CONTINUES ITS LUCRATIVE FLIGHTS TO TAIPEI AND TOKYO. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THAI INTERNATIONAL WILL BE ALLOWED TO KEEP ITS PROFITABLE BANGKOK-HONG KONG-TAIPEI-TOKYO ROUTE, DESPITE THAI INTERNATIONAL, UNLIKE ITS MALAYSIAN COUNTERPART,

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BEING A GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISE. THE INNOCENCE ON WHICH THE ASSUMPTION IS BASED POINTS OUT AGAIN THE LACK OF DETAILED PLANNING AND RESEARCH WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED THE OVERALL THAI APPROACH TO THE CHINA MATTER.

5. PERHAPS THE MAJOR QUESTION TO BE RESOLVED, BUT ONE WHICH IS THOROUGHLY OBFUSCATED AT THIS TIME, IS THE ROLE OF THE INTELLIGENCE BUREAU OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES AND IN BURMA. LING FENDED OFF QUERIES ON THIS DELICATE POINT, MAINTAINING THAT OTHER CHANNELS HANDLE THIS ISSUE. WE FORSEE THIS MILITARY LINK BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS AS BEING THE MAJOR TROUBLE SPOT BETWEEN THE ROC AND THE RTG IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AS THE THAI COME TO GRIPS WITH SOME OF THE NETTLESOME DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTING THEIR

AGREEMENTS WITH PEKING. THE THAI WILL BE CONFRONTED
WITH CARRYING ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH PEKING AND THE ROC,
WHILE AT THE SAME TIME NEUTRALIZING IBMND SUPPORTERS WITHIN
THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT. AS THE ROC MORE MEEKLY THAN EXPECTED
FOLDS ITS TENT AND GOES AWAY, IT LEAVES BEHIND A SLEEPING
BUT POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME TIGER.
WHITEHOUSE

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